

**Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)**  
**Independent Living Committee Meeting Minutes**

March 17, 2021

**Members Present**

Ted Chittenden  
Steve Tepper  
Brian Dulude  
Katie Gomez  
Frank Vance  
John McCann

**Members Absent**

**Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

**Guests Present**

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**Call to Order and Introductions**

Ted Chittenden called the meeting to order at 9:01 am. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

**Ground Rules Discussion**

Ted Chittenden stated Lindsey Powers distributed some notes regarding council meeting rules. Mr. Chittenden stated the most important thing for committee members to know is that all information should be sent to Lindsey Powers for distribution to all committee members. Frank Vance stated that he was not a member of the GCBVI and inquired whether he would still be able to participate on the IL Committee. Ted Chittenden stated that Frank Vance was welcome to participate on the committee as a community member. Ted Chittenden stated that all community members had the same rights as council members except for being eligible to Chair a committee.

**Committee Scope Discussion**

Ted Chittenden stated the primary scope of the committee would be to offer recommendations regarding the Independent Living (IL) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.

## **Proposed IL Funds Increase Discussion**

Ted Chittenden stated he requested an update from Amy Porterfield and/or Donald Porterfield regarding the proposed IL funding but had not received a response. Ted Chittenden stated the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA) was requesting the Legislature include an additional \$500,000 for the IL program, primarily to serve individuals over 55 and individuals under 55 that were not seeking VR services. Ted Chittenden stated the council had made the recommendation previously prior to the pandemic, in which the Governor's Office was in support, but was suspended due to COVID-19. He noted that Bob Kresmer, GCBVI Chair, would ensure the Governor's Office was still in support of the additional funding prior to making the recommendation again. Ted Chittenden stated that Bob Kresmer had requested the IL Committee recommend how the additional IL funding should be allocated between individuals over 55 and individuals under 55. Brian Dulude stated that currently, there was \$7000,000 - \$800,000 allocated to the Older Individuals Who Are Blind (OIB) program, which was administered through the IL program. Mr. Dulude stated clients over 55 were able to receive training in Orientation and Adjustment to Disability, Orientation and Mobility (O&M), Assistive Technology (AT) and rehabilitation teaching. He noted the IL program had 5 teachers and the vendors, Arizona Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ACBVI) and SAAVI Services for the Blind, that were able to offer services to clients.

Brian Dulude stated there were approximately 120 individuals on the IL wait list, and his goal was to assign 15 individuals to receive services each month and to ultimately reduce the wait list. Brian Dulude stated he was working with HR to fill the IL Program Manager position as well as a Rehabilitation Technician, O&M, AT, and rehabilitation instructor positions. Ted Chittenden inquired regarding the average cost to put an individual through the IL program and how many individuals could the IL program serve with the current funding. Brian Dulude stated the IL program served 400 individuals in 2019 and just over 250 in 2020. Mr. Dulude stated the average cost of services varied because some clients required more AT training, which required more instruction hours with their instructors. Ted Chittenden inquired regarding the number of individuals under 55 that were not interested in VR services but requested IL services and were denied due to a lack of funding. Brian Dulude stated the IL program was not tracking that information, although many individuals were seeking VR in addition to IL services. Frank Vance stated he knew individuals that were not eligible for employment and were denied IL services. Katie Gomez stated that SAAVI received calls from individuals under 55 and were referred to VR for services. Ted Chittenden inquired whether it would be difficult for the IL program to track the number of individuals under 55 that were not interested in VR

services but were interested in IL services. Brian Dulude stated that individuals contacted the IL office and the VR office regarding services, and he could work with Administration to potentially track that information. Frank Vance stated that individuals under 55 that were not interested in employment but were seeking IL services might lie about their interest in employment, which decreased VR's successful closure rate. Katie Gomez agreed that the successful closures would likely increase if the clients in the VR program were interested in obtaining employment. John McCann stated the difficulty in obtaining an accurate record of individuals that wanted IL services but were not interested in employment if those individuals were not truthful about their intentions. Brian Dulude stated that many blind and visually impaired individuals thought they were not eligible for employment but changed their minds after receiving training. Ted Chittenden stated the challenge in requesting additional funding without statistics indicating the need for those services. John McCann stated the IL program would need to show how the additional funds were used and to justify the maintenance of those funds.

Ted Chittenden stated his understanding that Bob Kresmer and Amy Porterfield wanted the committee to determine the percentage of \$500,000 funds that should be allocated to individuals under 55 and over 55. Ted Chittenden suggested that 20% of funds be allocated to individuals under 55 and 80% be allocated to individuals over 55. Brian Dulude suggested the funds be split 50/50 between the two groups. Brian Dulude noted the reason for requesting the additional funds was to restore the funds that were lost previously. Frank Vance agreed that the funds be split equally between the two groups. Mr. Vance inquired whether the IL contract rates would be updated. Brian Dulude stated the Contracts Unit would be able to provide more information regarding contract rates. Katie Gomez and John McCann agreed that the funds should be allocated equally among the two IL groups. Ted Chittenden stated the committee had come to a consensus that the additional IL funds be equally distributed among individuals under 55 and over 55. Frank Vance stated the Contracts Unit might be more receptive to hearing from the council rather than a vendor. Ted Chittenden stated that Amy Porterfield had experience working with the Contracts Unit, and he could inquire with her on that matter. Steve Tepper stated that if a contracted amount was increased, then either fewer individuals would be served or there would need to be a greater allocation. Mr. Tepper stated the council could investigate a greater total budget allocation for those contracts.

### **Committee Membership Discussion**

Ted Chittenden stated the IL Committee could have 6-9 members, and the committee currently had 6 members. He noted that if any committee member

wanted to recommend an individual join the committee, to inform him or Lindsey Powers.

### **Agenda and Date for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Public Information Committee will be determined. Agenda items are as follows:

- Proposed IL Funds Increase Discussion
- State ILB Program Discussion

### **Announcements**

John McCann stated the Arizona Council of the Blind (AzCB) State Conference would be held April 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> and would include presentations from the Arizona Talking Book Library, Sun Sounds, and fitness, iOS and Android app panels.

### **Public Comment**

A call to the public was made with no response's forthcoming.

### **Adjournment of Meeting**

John McCann motioned to adjourn the meeting. Frank Vance seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 am.